

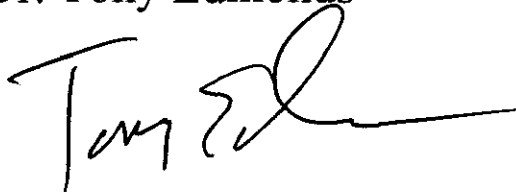
# **Quayle Hunt: Dan Quayle and the National Media**

An Honors Thesis (HONORS 499)

by

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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tony Edmonds', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

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*“Now that Presidential succession and procedures  
for Presidential disability are secured, hopefully we  
will choose men for Vice President who we feel are  
qualified to serve as the President of the United  
States.”*

*- Former Senator Birch Bayh of Indiana in the introduction to  
Donald Young's American Roulette*

# **Abstract**

In studying the life and career of the 44<sup>th</sup> Vice President of the United States, two distinct pictures of Dan Quayle quickly emerge. One is a supremely unflattering caricature: a bumbling moron who utters silly sounding statements like, “Republicans understand the importance of bondage between a mother and child” (CSUS.edu) and inspired the character of an idiotic Vice President in the film My Fellow Americans (a character who quotes lyrics from “Muskrat Love” at a state funeral).

The other picture is that of an ambitious and tactically adroit rising star who was elected to the United States Congress before his 30<sup>th</sup> birthday and, until his 1992 bid for a second term as vice president, had never lost an election.

This paper’s goal is to examine how and why the two mutually exclusive images arose. If the public perception of Quayle’s intellect had strayed so far from reality – and it had – what factors led this to happen? Why was the media coverage of him so harsh? To what degree was Quayle culpable? Why was he largely unable to shake the unsavory image?

By examining Quayle’s path to power, how the media covered it, and how he related to them, I hope to answer these questions.

## **Acknowledgements**

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-I’d also like to thank Mr. Stephen Bell and Mr. Phil Bremen. The insights and candor of both these distinguished journalists were invaluable.

# **Chapter One: Mr. Quayle goes to Washington**

## **Introduction**

*"I've never had to be a beggar, that's for sure" (Woodward and Broder 38). In its own right, this statement is harmless enough - after all most Americans have never had to beg - but coming from Dan Quayle, the statement seems to verify his popular image as a dallying child of privilege.*

*So pervasive was this image that to this day many otherwise credible sources incorrectly add "the third" to the former vice president's full name, James Danforth Quayle. The sentiment that Quayle's life had been unusually free of want or adversity, greatly exaggerated at times, though not without a grain of truth, was among the many factors that made the Senator from Indiana particularly vulnerable to media scrutiny in the summer and fall of 1988.*

*Unfortunately for Quayle, the image of an untested child of privilege was only one of many public relations hurdles he would have to face as vice president. In many ways, the much more formidable perception was that Quayle was intellectually ill equipped for his position. This impression was fueled by his poor academic performance and susceptibility to misspeak (e.g. from March 1990, "If we do not succeed, then we run the risk of failure") [CSUS.edu].*

*But how could a man who would come to face such daunting public relations problems become Vice President in the first place? To answer that, we must examine how Quayle grew from his roots in a tiny town in northern Indiana into a United States Senator.*

*Dan Quayle was born in Huntington, Indiana on February 4, 1947, to Corinne and James C. Quayle. The "silver spoon" image with which Dan Quayle would eventually have to contend was rooted in family connections. His maternal grandfather was wealthy newspaper*

*tycoon Eugene Pulliam, but his opulence generally didn't extend to the Quayles. As journalists Bob Woodward and David Broder wrote, "[Pulliam] . . . didn't believe in inherited wealth. Dan Quayle grew up as a child of middle-class privilege, very protected but not pampered: country clubs but public schools. His family homes were modest" (Woodward and Broder 35).*

*The family lived in Huntington until 1955 when they moved to Phoenix, Arizona, so James – who worked as a manager for his father-in-law – could begin a new job. The future vice president spent critical formative years (ages eight to 16) in the Grand Canyon State. Then, in 1963, his father purchased the Huntington newspaper for which he'd worked years before and moved the family back to Indiana.*

*Quayle graduated from Huntington High School in 1965 and enrolled at DePauw University. There he seemed to put a higher priority on the golf team – on which he starred - then on academics, graduating in 1969 with mostly C's (a fact that would later be of considerable political inconvenience).*

*While attending Indiana University Law School in Indianapolis, Quayle met fellow law student Marilyn Tucker. In 1972, just a few months after meeting, the two wed. The marriage obviously was a milestone in both their lives, but beyond that, the two formed a potent political team. The Quayles received their Juris Doctorates in 1974 and moved to Huntington, setting up a law practice, "Quayle and Quayle," with Dan also publishing his father's newspaper.*

## *The House*

Many authors classify Dan Quayle as a Ronald Reagan disciple, and while Quayle shared many values with the 40<sup>th</sup> President, Quayle instead attributes his penchant for attacking big government – a theme very well received by fellow Hoosiers – to his upbringing in the home of a newspaper family:

You don't get these values overnight or from some book you read somewhere. You have to go back to my background in the newspaper business. People in the newspaper business hate the government. They distrust the government. It is the last unregulated business; it is almost immune from regulation. It is deeply ingrained in them that the government should keep hands off, that government cannot do any good, that it only brings trouble. That distrust is deeply ingrained in me" (Fenno 8).

Twelve years before Saturday Night Live ever satirized him, the 29 year-old Quayle, in the family tradition, was running a newspaper (The Huntington (Indiana) Herald-Press, circulation 8,300). He also was practicing law with his wife Marilyn, and vaguely considering entering politics. Then in the spring of 1976, Quayle attended a lunch that would change his life forever. At the lunch, Ernie Williams, editor of the Fort Wayne News-Sentinel, and Orvas Beers, Chairman of the Allen County Republican Party told Quayle they had something important to discuss. The two power brokers were asking the young publisher – who'd graduated from the Indiana University Law School just two years earlier – to run for the United States House of Representatives!

Quayle was already considering becoming a candidate for public office but had set his sights considerably lower, on the state General Assembly. For the young and ambitious Quayle, the offer represented a tremendous opportunity, but one at which he was not instantly prepared to jump. The appeal may have been greater if not for the opponent, veteran Democrat representative J. Edward Roush. The entrenched congressman enjoyed wide popularity in the district and several of the area's leading Republicans had already declined to

run. Quayle performed some quick political calculations and made two demands; “I told [Beers] that I couldn’t give him a decision, that I would think it over. But I told him I wouldn’t even consider it unless they guaranteed me that I’d have no primary opposition and unless they would raise money for me” (Fenno 4).

Quayle’s 1976 candidacy was seen by many as a “dress rehearsal” for a serious campaign in 1978, though Quayle rejected this notion: “When you run, you run hard, and you expect to win,” although he did allow, “. . . [E]xcept for me and Marilyn and maybe one or two other people . . . [no one] thought we could win” (Woodward and Broder 40). Indeed, at one point, Republican polls showed the newcomer trailing Roush 27 percent to 61 (Fenno 5).

Despite all the factors suggesting his campaign was hopeless, Quayle, always the optimist, remained undaunted. His main strength as a candidate was his energy and charismatic ability to communicate in small groups. As a staffer in Quayle’s 1980 senate race said, “All you have to do is turn him loose in an alien environment and collect him at the other end and he will have converted everyone in the place” (Fenno 13). Quayle did just that at venues ranging from restaurants to Friday night high school football games and slowly turned the tide. When election night came, Quayle won with 55 percent of the vote, beating Roush by 19,000 votes.

### *The Senate*

In 1978 Quayle walloped Democrat John Walda (later an Indiana University trustee) with 66 percent of the vote and retained his seat. Immediately he set his eyes on a bigger prize: the U.S. Senate. Democrat Birch Bayh (father of Evan Bayh, who currently holds his father’s old Senate seat, and was a two-term governor of Indiana), had been a member of the elite upper house of congress for 18 years. Quayle reasoned that like most Indiana Democrats

holding national office, Bayh would be vulnerable to charges of supporting big government, bureaucracy, and taxes.

The anticipated showdown for the seat was to have been between Bayh and then Governor Otis Bowen. Quayle wanted to run, but knew the nomination was Bowen's for the asking. Publicly Bowen – then in his mid-60's – hadn't stated whether or not he intended to enter the race, but Quayle suspected that he would ultimately bow out. With that suspicion in mind, Quayle approached the governor and received his blessing to initiate an underground "If not Bowen, Quayle" campaign.

Eventually Bowen did decline to run, but the governor seemed tepid at best about Quayle's impending candidacy. In Bowen's mind, said Quayle "I had not waited my turn" (Fenno 6). When announcing he wouldn't run, the governor tainted what otherwise would have been superb news for Quayle. According to Richard Fenno, Bowen suggested more than a dozen possible alternative Republican candidates and didn't include Quayle. Interestingly, Quayle offered a slightly different version of the story to journalists Bob Woodward and David Broder, "[Bowen] mentioned my name first out of about 30 others that were potential senate candidates." In either case, with Bowen out of contention, Quayle was the clear frontrunner for his party's nomination thanks to the considerable funds he had left over from his 1978 reelection campaign and the dozens of endorsements already secured with the "If not Bowen, Quayle" movement.

Notwithstanding whatever reservations Bowen had, Quayle easily secured the nomination but found himself once again in the role of underdog. Yet again he would face a popular incumbent Democrat with few giving Quayle much chance of victory. In a statement exemplifying his youthful confidence, when asked if taking on Bayh would be a daunting challenge, Quayle said,



I can remember when we started out in 1976; the name recognition of Dan Quayle outside Huntington was about one percent and in some parts of the Fourth District it was zero. A lot of people warned me that I was running against a tough incumbent, and it was true. But we won. In 1980, we're starting out again in Huntington. We have a long hill to climb, but I'm confident we can do it (Fenno 6).

Quayle's notion might understandably be interpreted as bravado had he not backed up his claim. There was no magic formula to Quayle's success; his capital was tireless hard work and charisma. As in 1976, Quayle routinely put in 16-hour days on the campaign trail and slowly but surely eroded his opponent's seemingly insurmountable lead.

In September 1980, Quayle offered this assessment of what had by then become a tight race with Bayh, "We started out May 14 last year and have moved in a straight line ever since. At one point, we were 30 points down. One of Bayh's polls had us 40 points down. In August we were 8 points down; and now we are 4 points down" (Fenno 13).

Running on the themes that Bayh had lost touch with Hoosiers and that government bureaucracy had gotten out of control, Quayle continued his steady ascent through the fall. On election night, Quayle, 33 years old and six years removed from law school, topped the veteran Bayh by 166,000 votes, winding up with 54 percent of the vote.

For the next eight years Quayle would serve as the junior senator from Indiana and generally voted in a way commensurate with his conservative reputation. In 1981 and 1982 the Congressional Quarterly gave Quayle support scores of 88 percent and 86 percent for conservative coalition votes, i.e., votes in which most Republicans and southern Democrats opposed most northern Democrats (Fenno 36). Ironically, though he fought for small government and fiscal restraint throughout his political career, Quayle's Senate tenure is best remembered for a 1982 social aid bill cosponsored with liberal Senator Ted Kennedy of Massachusetts: the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA).

The bill, which Quayle and his staff authored, replaced the bloated, inefficient Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (Fenno 35). There seems to be nearly universal agreement that the JTPA provided better training at a lower cost than its predecessor. Quayle's efforts on the JTPA increased his gravitas immensely. In guiding the bill through committee, congress, and ultimately to the Oval Office, the 35 year-old senator had not only to write the bill but also build bipartisan backing for it and persuade a reluctant Reagan administration for its support. Indeed, it seems almost certain that if not for his success on the JTPA, Quayle's vice presidential prospects in 1988 would have been virtually nonexistent.

Of course, before he could look beyond the Senate, he first had to retain his seat in 1986. Happily for Quayle, Democratic efforts to retake the seat were uninspired at best. This was due in part to Quayle, who, as he here explains, shrewdly warded off his strongest potential opponents:

When the mayor of Fort Wayne was thinking of running, we went into Fort Wayne and held a big fund-raiser right under his nose. When the mayor of Evansville was thinking of running, we held JTPA hearings there and invited him to come as a witness. We made him help us. When Congressman Phil Sharp was thinking of running, we held Lincoln Day dinners in Anderson, Muncie, and Richmond – all in his district. We were saying to all of them, “Come on, take me on. We’re ready for you.” And none of them wanted any part of that kind of tough race (Fenno 153).

Desperate for a candidate, in April the state Democratic Party announced that anyone and everyone was welcome to apply for the nomination. After several applicants were auditioned, Valparaiso City Councilwoman Jill Long received the Democratic endorsement. Sadly for Long, the nomination was virtually all she received from the party. She managed to raise \$100,000 for her campaign compared to the \$2 million available to Quayle (Fenno 154).

With the outcome never truly in question, the Quayle campaign adopted the goal of winning with 60 percent of the vote, correctly reasoning that it would strengthen Quayle's

standing in the party. The goal was met, and with 61 percent of the vote, Quayle set a record for the greatest percentage margin of victory ever for a U.S. Senator from Indiana (Fenno 165).

## **Chapter Two: Off to the Races**

### **Transition**

*In 1987, Dan Quayle was 40 years old and just a year removed from winning reelection by an unprecedented margin. He had demonstrated initiative and the ability to bridge political divides with the JTPA, and was considered a rising star in the Republican Party. There's every reason to believe Quayle would have been strong enough to remain in the senate for a very long time.*

*But Quayle believed he'd reached a point where he had to examine his options. Constant throughout his political career was his endorsement of congressional term limits and a belief that it was easy to spend too much time in Washington D.C. In fact, in his Vice Presidential memoir Standing Firm, Quayle had this to say of his first political opponent: "Ed Roush was a decent, hard-working family man who had simply been in Washington too long. On critical issues . . . he had traded a Hoosier perspective for a Potomac one" (Quayle 13).*

*Quayle had said many times that 12 years was long enough for anyone to serve in the Senate. Thus, he had to go somewhere by 1992, or he'd either be forced to retire or go back on his word. In the federal government, the only positions representing an upward move from the Senate are the presidency and vice presidency. Seemingly the only other plausible political move – excluding appointments – was for the Indiana governorship. Little seems to have been said by Quayle or anyone else about a potential gubernatorial run in 1988. The logical conclusion is that Quayle either wasn't interested or abandoned any such interest in lieu of a quiet pursuit of a spot on the 1988 Republican Presidential ballot.*

## *On your Marks*

The process of “running” for Vice President of the United States is more complex than perhaps any other office in the world. After securing a spot on his or her party’s presidential ballot, vice presidential candidates function primarily to woo votes for their respective running mates. This obviously is in stark contrast to candidates’ normal objective of selling themselves.

Until Franklin Roosevelt bucked the trend in 1940, Presidential nominees had no say in selecting their running mate; this was done by their party (The Twentieth Century Fund 42). Naturally, seeking broad support, the parties often chose men quite different from one another philosophically. For example, as the world would abruptly discover, Theodore Roosevelt was an aggressive reformer; yet he’d come to the vice presidency on the ticket with cautious, conservative William McKinley, who was basically content to avoid rocking the boat.

Of course, this system usually didn’t foster constructive relationships between presidents and the men constitutionally ordained as their successors. Further, as was the case with McKinley and Roosevelt, it frequently set the stage for radical policy changes in the event of succession.

Due largely to concern over this instability, and the belief that presidential candidates will balance their own tickets to maximize their chances of victory, in modern times the selection of running mate has been left entirely to the aspiring Commander-in-Chief.

Thus, as Quayle sought to become the first Hoosier to serve as president or vice president since Thomas Marshall (under Woodrow Wilson), he did not need to run a traditional, publicized campaign but instead merely to appeal to presumptive Republican nominee, then Vice President George H.W. Bush. How does one conduct a campaign with a

target audience of one? In Quayle's words, "The vice presidency isn't an office you can campaign for -- in fact, any demonstration of eagerness for it is more likely to hurt than help -- but I had tried, as subtly as I could, to make it clear I as both qualified and available" (Quayle 19).

In some ways, Bush too was seeking subtlety. Through leaks, in recent elections the national media had habitually revealed the vice presidential selection almost as soon as it was made. So Bush, wanting to buck the trend and use the "buzz" of his choice to his advantage, played his cards very close to the vest. Told at a campaign stop in Greenville, South Carolina, that Republicans were getting impatient for his choice, Bush said, "Tell them to cool their jets. I'll be out at the appropriate time to make that announcement, and it will be laden with suspense . . . and everybody will say, 'What a fantastic choice'" (Witcover 335)!

Surprisingly, no one in the media seemed to realize it, but Bush was foreshadowing his intention to defy convention. Heading into the Republican National Convention in New Orleans, Louisiana, most analysts expected Bush to choose either Senator Bob Dole of Kansas -- who had been Bush's strongest challenger for the nomination -- or Jack Kemp, then the Secretary of the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

However neither Dole nor Kemp had a particularly good personal relationship with Bush. During a joint television appearance the night of the New Hampshire primary, NBC anchor Tom Brokaw asked Dole if he had anything to say to the vice president. Angered over television spots accusing him of being soft on tax increases, Dole said to tell Bush to "stop lying about my record" (Witcover 336).

Weeks later, after Bush had clinched the nomination, Dole was asked if Bush's lengthy vice presidential search was "demeaning." Bush was watching the interview and didn't take it well when Dole responded that it was. According to Bush aide Roger Ailes, "I

saw Bush look at the set. . . . His whole body language said everything he needed to say” (Witcover 339).\*

As for Kemp, for lack of a better phrase he seems to simply have gotten on Bush’s nerves. Witcover summed up the demise of Kemp’s chances this way:

One Bush insider said later: “Kemp used to drive Bush nuts at leadership meetings with Reagan. He’d go on about taxes and SDI [Strategic Defense Initiative] and never stop. [Bush] would look at him like a nagging wife.” At a breakfast meeting in which Bush sought but did not get Kemp’s immediate endorsement, Kemp subjected Bush to a windy lecture about SDI that helped seal his fate (Witcover 336).

In addition, unlike Quayle or Dole, had Bush chosen the New Yorker Kemp he would’ve squandered the chance to have the only Midwesterner on either presidential ticket. (Interestingly, Dole and Kemp would go on to comprise the Republican ticket in 1996.)

In addition to geography, Quayle promised to lend balance to the ticket philosophically. In his words,

I was a strong champion of conservative causes, especially national defense, and that, too, would be an asset to George Bush, a onetime rival of Ronald Reagan, who, even after eight years as his loyal Vice President, had to contend with the suspicions of some right-wing elements of the party (Quayle 18).

In his study of the vice presidency, Wreath Layer or Policy Player?, Paul Kengor notes that Quayle was “young and energetic” adding, “Moreover, Quayle was well recommended outside conservative circles . . . Quayle’s work in the [S]enate also led him to receive high compliments from the likes of traditional Democrats like Ted Kennedy, who worked closely with Quayle in cosponsoring the Job Training Partnership Act” (Kengor 166).

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\*Ailes, who journalist Jules Witcover implies was lobbying hard for Bush to choose Quayle, demands mention in any study of contemporary political coverage. Ailes would later head Fox News Channel which, as of this writing, has become dominant in the 24 hour cable news field, relegating once monopolistic rival CNN to a distant second in ratings. Ailes’s channel, which even many supporters concede has a conservative bent, rose to this position thanks largely to the perceived liberal bias of traditional news outlets. In the eyes of many, an exemplification of said bias would be the merciless lambasting to which Dan Quayle was to be subjected.

The weekend before the Republican National Convention was to begin, a New York Times article listed Quayle as one of six candidates Bush was considering (Quayle 23). Throughout his “covert campaign” Quayle had kept a low profile both because the Bush people had asked him to and because he didn’t want someone else’s selection to seem like his failure. However, the same night the Times story ran, conservative commentator George Will invited Quayle to appear alongside Dole and Kemp the following morning on ABC’s This Week with David Brinkley.

Quayle accepted, and, in what would turn out to be an exception to the rule, he actually benefited from interaction with the national media. Reflecting on the appearance, Quayle wrote:

I was later told that neither Dole nor Kemp – both of whom had run against Bush in the primaries – came off that well. On the program I stressed my understanding of how a vice-presidential candidate had to direct his campaign at the direction at the top man on the ticket. I later learned that Bob Kimmitt showed Bush a tape of the show, and I’m sure it was a factor that helped to make up his mind (Quayle 24).

Finally, Bush also had to consider his own political liabilities. Though it paled in comparison to the denigration Quayle was to endure, Bush also had to cope with negative press as vice president. Despite having fought in World War Two, one of the most persistent invectives was “wimp.” He also had a reputation of being stodgy and conventional to a fault. Desiring to appear bold, while simultaneously wanting to emerge from the shadow of Ronald Reagan, Bush wanted a daring choice.

### *Stumbling from the Gate*

On August 16, 1988, in New Orleans’s Spanish Plaza, George Bush announced his choice of Huntington, Indiana’s James Danforth Quayle as the Republican candidate for Vice President of the United States. In his introduction Bush called Quayle “a young man born in



the middle of this century, from the middle of this country . . . a leader in matters of national security . . . a man of the future” (Witcover 341).

At any moment, the Vice President of the United States can, in a matter of seconds, become the most powerful person on the planet. As such, a thorough review of anyone aspiring to the office is a natural and necessary step. That said, neither Quayle nor then Vice President Bush could have imagined what was about to happen.

Even before Quayle was chosen, it had been decided that Stuart Spencer, a veteran campaign consultant from California, would coordinate the vice presidential campaign. “[Quayle],” Spencer said, “didn’t understand what he was getting into. He didn’t understand the enormity of it” (Woodward and Broder 56).

Quayle himself conceded miscalculation, “[I] perhaps overestimated my skills, underestimated some of [Spencer’s and the other assigned handlers’] tendencies. And did not have a good understanding of what the national political scene was going to demand of me. I didn’t handle things as well as I should have” (Woodward and Broder 56).

In media circles, the 41 year-old Quayle’s selection was almost universally considered a long shot. Thus when the announcement came that the relatively unknown junior senator from Indiana would be on the ballot, there flourished throughout the national media an immediate and immeasurable lust for knowledge on Quayle.

Unfortunately for Quayle and his new team, one side effect of the secrecy of Bush’s search was an unpreparedness to satisfy that hunger. As journalists raced to learn all they could about the young senator, staffers scrambled to throw together press releases.

Steve Bell, long time ABC News correspondent and former anchor of ABC’s “World News This Morning,” recalled that the first Quayle literature the campaign distributed was a

brief resume-like biography printed on lavender paper. According to Bell, there was one item that “jumped off the page” to any competent reporter: Quayle’s service in the National Guard.

Though this would be considered a plus for most politicians, for Quayle it was potentially problematic. This was because his grandfather (and by extension his grandfather’s newspapers) had been very supportive of the Vietnam War, and many saw the National Guard as merely a way to avoid being sent to Southeast Asia. Thus, according to Bell, it was a no-brainer to ask about the circumstances of Quayle’s National Guard service.

Sure enough, at a press conference on the 17<sup>th</sup>, Quayle was asked if it was hypocritical for him to have personally supported the Vietnam War, but via the National Guard, avoided the draft. Witcover describes Quayle’s response:

In explaining his enlistment now, he displayed an incredible political naïveté, telling earnestly about how all he had on his mind was getting married, going to law school, and raising a family. He topped his remarks off by adding: “I did not know in 1969 that I would be in this room today,” implying that had he known going into the Guard would someday hurt his political future, he never would have enlisted. . . . [The Bush handlers] knew they had their work cut out for them. Here it was only the first day, and they were already faced with a giant task of damage control (Witcover 342).

As part of this damage control, the campaign decided to have Quayle go on the major networks that night to clarify the circumstances of his National Guard service. Quayle made an immense mistake in the first interview with NBC’s Tom Brokaw. Brokaw asked if Quayle had any help securing a spot in the Guard. After noting that 20 years had passed and he didn’t remember every detail, Quayle disastourously said it was possible that, “Phone calls were made” (Woodward and Broder 81).

Later, CBS’s Dan Rather asked if someone in Quayle’s powerful family had used influence to arrange his Guard entry. In a puzzling response that seemed even more incriminating, Quayle answered, “I’m almost certain the governor or lieutenant governor were not involved in that” (Woodward and Broder 81).

For Quayle, the real tragedy of this response was that there was nothing to it.

Woodward and Border, who reported on and investigated Quayle extensively for their book, confirm that the only calls which Quayle may have been recalling were innocuous inquiries to see if the Guard unit to which Quayle was planning to apply had openings. (It did as it turned out) [Woodward and Broder 82].

The convention had gone extremely badly for Quayle. The media's "megafrenzy" about Quayle, as author Larry Sabato termed it, had already begun (Quayle 39). However, on the August 19, Quayle and Bush were scheduled to visit the vice presidential nominee's hometown of Huntington. At that point, it's very likely that the situation could have been salvaged, provided that the National Guard issue was properly explained and spun and that Quayle was effectively reintroduced with the considerable plusses he brought to the ticket announced. Sadly for Quayle, what ensued instead would be remembered as "The Battle of Huntington."

As one would expect, the people of Huntington were quite proud of their native son.\* They also were livid over how he had been portrayed in newspapers and on television. When the national press assigned to the event got off their bus, they were greeted with boos, but the real fireworks didn't begin until Quayle's outdoor press conference. Quayle's account reads:

Some in the media wanted to go for the kill and their questions became more combative. The harder they pushed the madder the crowd got . . . .

The press's questions were often outrageous. Ellen Hume of the Wall Street Journal, for example, screamed at me, wanting to know how I had felt when "people were dying in Vietnam while [I was] writing press releases" (one of my desk duties in the Guard). This absurdity was answered by angry shouts and name-calling from the crowd, who followed my own replies with deafening cheers. It continued on like this, a wild scene (Quayle 40-41).

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\*This support was unconditional, enduring Quayle's negative press and the passage of time. In fact, part of the research for this project was a visit to Huntington to see "The Dan Quayle Center and Vice Presidential Museum."

There can be little doubt that for most members of the media in attendance, the intent had been to grill the young vice presidential nominee and see if any more humorous gaffes were to be had. Instead the people of Huntington put the reporters on the defensive. At the time, Mitch Daniels, then a political aide in the White House and eventual Indiana Governor, said scheduling the event in Huntington was, “a terrible mistake. It poisoned the atmosphere for another several weeks” (Woodward and Broder 66). Later, the Washington Post’s executive editor Len Downie told Quayle he thought the resentment spawned by the “battle” had contributed to, “keeping [the media] closed-minded” about Quayle throughout the entire Bush administration (Quayle 41).

Indeed, Quayle was receiving criticism not just from Democrats and liberal columnists but also from within the ranks of Republicans and conservatives. John McLaughlin, host of PBS’s “McLaughlin Group,” is a member of the conservative wing of the party to which Quayle was supposed to appeal. Yet on August 23, he wrote a piece in The New York Times versatily managing to criticize both the media and the selection of Quayle simultaneously. After insinuating that Quayle would’ve never been elected to the Senate without clinging to Ronald Reagan’s coattails, McLaughlin continued, “. . . Indiana is safely Republican, so Quayle’s selection was redundant. [And it isn’t] clear that the choice is harmless: the media will continue to mercilessly scrutinize his enlistment in the National Guard, as well as any other issue that can be found” (McLaughlin).

Things were going so badly for Quayle that even stories that were otherwise positive for the campaign managed to show him in a negative light. Instead of being a part of the ticket’s success, it seemed everything was being achieved despite him. Four days after the “Battle of Huntington,” Bush/Quayle surpassed Dukakis/Bentsen in the polls for the first time. The New York Times story read: “Vice President Bush overtook Michael S. Dukakis in

popularity after the Republican National Convention even though many voters are skeptical of his running mate, Senator Dan Quayle of Indiana” (Oreskes).

Even as late as mid-September, many Republicans were still bemoaning Quayle’s selection. Writing in National Review, Neal B. Freeman went so far as to theorize that Bush had passed on his preferred candidate because he was *too* good:

Bush was obliged... to go young and right. But when he got to the obvious name – Kemp’s – Jim Baker saw a man who was born to cast shadows. So, cleverly, he turned to Quayle . . .

No TKO yet, but at the end of round one, it was starkly clear that the answers that had satisfied the daily paper in Huntington, Indiana (J. Danforth Quayle, former associate publisher), were not selling to the national media (Freeman).

According to Steve Bell, a 20-year veteran of ABC’s news department, “[Constant unfavorable Quayle stories] simply became a way for the media to convey its low opinion of Quayle, much like the attention to [President Gerald] Ford ‘stumbling’” (Bell).

With so much negative press, late night talk show hosts like Johnny Carson and David Letterman couldn’t resist some easy shots at Quayle as well. In retrospect, this may have triggered a cycle. “When the late-night comics make you a laughing-stock, it’s tough for anyone else, including reporters, to take you seriously,” said Phil Bremen, an NBC News correspondent and former television news anchor in Indianapolis (Bremen).

The next noteworthy event in the campaign from Quayle’s perspective was the October 5 Vice Presidential debate in Omaha, Nebraska. Democratic Presidential nominee Michael Dukakis had chosen Senator Lloyd Bentsen of Texas as his running mate. The debate with Bentsen represented Quayle’s last chance in the campaign to be in the spotlight and hopefully repair some of the serious damage done to his reputation.

The debate is now best remembered for a famous and very quotable verbal haymaker (and good sound bite) landed by Bentsen. As if the barb itself wasn’t enough, the fact that Quayle left himself so open to it only bolstered the impression that he was in over his head.

The remark in question, and the statement that drew it, are thoroughly documented by

Witcover:

[Quayle] was back to [vice presidential] qualifications, this time with a politically disastrous result. "It is not just age," he said "it's accomplishments, it's experience. I have far more experience than many others that sought the office of vice president of this country. I have as much experience in the Congress as Jack Kennedy did when sought the presidency . . ."

Bentsen stiffened when he heard this answer. When [Judy Woodruff, then of PBS's "MacNeil/Lehrer NewsHour"] invited him to reply, he glared over at Quayle, "Senator," he said in measured tones, "I served with Jack Kennedy. I knew Jack Kennedy. Jack Kennedy was a friend of mine. Senator, you are no Jack Kennedy" (Witcover 351).

Technically Quayle was correct. He did indeed have as much congressional experience as President Kennedy had, not to mention the fact that he hadn't claimed to be another Jack Kennedy, but it was nevertheless an unwise comparison to make and something Quayle had been coached to avoid. The sentiment among Republican campaign staff was seemingly summed up well by Mitch Daniels's reaction, "God damn it! We told him not to get into that" (Witcover 351)! Meanwhile in Omaha, Quayle seemed stunned and, in the words of Meg Greenfield, editor of the Washington Post editorial page, looked like "a deer caught in the headlights" (Quayle 65).

According to an Associated Press poll, 51 percent felt Bentsen had won the debate with only 27 percent thinking Quayle had won and 22 percent calling it a tie (Quayle 64). But for Democrats, Bentsen's victory was only a silver lining on an increasingly dark cloud. A poll conducted in Cleveland, Ohio showed that while four out of five voters thought Bentsen had won the debate, an identical four out of five said the debate wouldn't affect their vote (Witcover 352).

Ultimately voters were concerned primarily about the top of the ticket. Dukakis by this time was widely perceived as a cold, "typical New England liberal" and had watched his formidable lead turn into a clear deficit. Republicans had used Dukakis's opposition to the

death penalty to effectively portray him as soft on crime. In the second debate between he and Bush, CNN's Bernard Shaw wanted to force the stoic Dukakis to show emotion and asked the governor if, in the event that his wife were raped and murdered, he would want the perpetrator executed (Witcover 354). Disregarding his wife's inclusion in the question, Dukakis reticently defended his opposition to capital punishment. "That was Dukakis for you," wrote Witcover, "Mr. Ice Water" (Witcover 354)

On November 8, 1989, George Bush and Dan Quayle captured 53.9 percent of the vote and 426 electoral votes to 46.1 percent and 112 electoral votes for Michael Dukakis and Lloyd Bentsen (Witcover 355).<sup>\*</sup> On January 20, 1989, Dan Quayle put his hand on the Bible and became the 44<sup>th</sup> Vice President of the United States.

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<sup>\*</sup>The actual final count was 426 to 111. A West Virginia elector, whose vote Dukakis had won, instead voted for Lloyd Bentsen (CenterforPolitics.org).

## **Chapter Three: “An awkward job”**

### *Transition*

*“The job is just awkward, an awkward job,” according to Quayle (Woodward and Broder 90). The United States vice presidency is awkward indeed, and unique. An accurate analogy can be made to an understudy in a theatre cast or a second string quarterback. The position has evolved substantially over the years, though one constant (at least since the implementation of the Constitution) has been that the vice president’s star must never shine brighter than the president’s.*

*This has sometimes caused resentment among the men who’ve held the office. John Nance Garner, President Franklin Roosevelt’s first vice president, said accepting the position was “the worst damn fool mistake I ever made,” adding that the office was “not worth a bucket of warm piss” (John Nance Garner). Before ascending to power in the wake of President William McKinley’s death, Vice President Theodore Roosevelt said, “[The vice-presidency] is not a steppingstone to anything except oblivion” (Hatfield). Perhaps the most poetic and telling of all musings on the office came from the first man ever to hold it.*

*“Gentlemen I feel great difficulty how to act,” said John Adams, “I am Vice President. In this I am nothing, but I could be everything” (Journal of William Maclay).*

*As vice president, Quayle never made disparaging remarks about his office but was certainly aware of the restraints it placed upon him. As opposed to his eight years in the Senate, Quayle said the vice presidency is a “much more confining job. You don’t have your own agenda. Your agenda is the president’s agenda” (Woodward and Broder 90).*

*Prophetically, Woodward and Broder also quote Bush’s Secretary of Defense’s feelings on*



*the job, “It’s an uncomfortable position,” said Dick Cheney. “The vice president is there sort of as an overall generalist” (Woodward and Broder 90).*

### *A Heartbeat Away*

Quayle had run the gauntlet in 1988, and despite the best efforts of political opponents and a significant part of the national media, he had become the 44<sup>th</sup> Vice President of the United States. Now, exactly what to do?

Because vice presidents are, in Dick Cheney’s words, “overall generalists,” nothing is “none of the vice president’s business.” Conversely, other than presiding over the Senate, there’s no jurisdiction that is all the vice president’s own. Thus, the actual day-to-day duties of the vice president depend almost exclusively on the president’s whim.

As humorously noted by former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, “The relationship between the president and any vice president is never easy; it is after all, disconcerting to have at one’s side a man whose life’s ambition will be achieved by one’s death” (Kengor 167). Nevertheless, Bush and Quayle seemed to have a genuine affection for each other. There can be little doubt that Quayle benefited from being vice president to a former vice president. For example, Bush, according to Quayle, encouraged him to “attend any Oval Office meeting, on domestic or foreign policy, that [he] wanted to” (Kengor 168).

President Bush made Quayle chairman of the White House Space Council and White House Council on Competitiveness (Witcover 381). In these roles Quayle would ultimately force a change of leadership at NASA (setting the stage for a new NASA credo: “Faster, better, cheaper”) and push for as much deregulation as possible – such as stopping the Environmental Protection Agency from implementing what Quayle considered to be an unreasonable definition of “wetlands” (Quayle 189, 278).

Of course, the best remembered event of the entire administration was the Persian Gulf War, which raged from January 17 to February 27 of 1991 (CNN.com). In the first major conflict since the Vietnam War, the United States and its allies would decisively expel Saddam Hussein's army from Kuwait and force it back into Iraq. As army General Thomas Kelly memorably put it, "Iraq went from the fourth-largest army in the world to the second-largest army in Iraq in 100 hours" (CNN.com).

During the war, the administration employed Quayle in a variety of ways. Paul Kengor describes this in detail:

. . . the vice president – beyond his basic constitutional and statutory duties – served basically three roles during the crisis. First, he was spokesman for the administration. This role allowed him to express the views of both himself and the administration in a number of speeches, as well as to serve as an emissary to foreign governments and visit U.S. troops on trips abroad. Second he was a liaison to the Congress. Third, he assumed the integral but nasty role of what might be called the administration's "point man," attacking liberal Democrats and war protesters, as well as other critics of the administration's Gulf policy (Kengor 182).

As valuable as his contribution during the Gulf War were, Quayle's most shining example of military statesmanship would occur eight months later with the far western reaches of the Pacific Ocean as a setting. The Philippines, a democratic U.S. ally and former colony, was in the midst of an attempted coup. Rebel aircraft were strafing President Corazon Aquino's palace and the Filipinos were requesting U.S. military assistance (Quayle 136).

At the time, the president, Secretary of State Jim Baker, and National Security Advisor Brent Scowcroft were all on *Air Force One* en route to a conference with Mikhail Gorbachev in Malta (Quayle 136). Quayle was called to the White House's situation room where he coordinated the American response with General Colin Powell (then Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff) and other members of the National Security Council. Keeping in touch with *Air Force One* via phone, Quayle ultimately recommended Powell's concept of putting a

“cap” on the airspace with a simple ultimatum to the rebel aircraft (“land or die” as it were). Bush approved the plan and the revolt was put down (Quayle 138).

By 1992, Quayle had grown into his office and seems to have been in Bush’s good graces. The president also was reportedly taking increasing interest in Quayle’s opinions and advice, “Quayle’s influence can’t be measured by a single event,” said a Bush advisor in 1992, “but in my judgment [during the three years] ... there has been a very definite favorable accumulation [of influence]” (Kengor 169).

### *A Tough Hill to Climb*

Despite whatever good marks he was getting from the president, Quayle’s relationship with the media continued to be sour. If Quayle were to resurrect his congressional image as a young and ambitious up-and-comer, he was going to need serious amounts of positive media exposure. Sadly for Quayle, by nature of the office, the vice president must almost always take a back seat to the Commander-in-Chief. This makes positive press attention of any kind agonizingly difficult to come by.

It seems the only surefire way for Quayle to get coverage was by faux pas; silly sounding quotes, regardless of the context from which they were taken, consistently garnered the kind of attention that no number of diplomatic missions ever could. In the process they seemed to confirm that the 44<sup>th</sup> Vice President of the United States was a living, breathing caricature.

Jules Witcover covered Quayle for the Baltimore Sun. Reflecting on those days in his book, he seems to sum up the spirit of the media covering Quayle in the administration’s early days, “. . . Quayle traveled . . . with an unusually large American press corps along, essentially on a gaffe watch. The reporters were *rewarded* [my emphasis] with only a few

minor incidents, but Quayle's reputation being what it was, they became newsworthy, or at least added to the growing list of Quayleisms" (Witcover 383).

So the media was, to an extent, gunning for Quayle. This was certainly unfair, though Quayle didn't help himself by continuing to provide gaffes to write about. In June 1989, Quayle, in his words, "fractured, scrambled and pureed" the United Negro College Fund's motto, "A mind is a terrible thing to waste" (Quayle 131). What Quayle actually said was, "What a waste it is to lose one's mind. Or not to have a mind is being very wasteful. How true that is" (CSUS.edu).

The best remembered "Quayleism" is undoubtedly the June 1992 'potatoe' incident." Quayle and his entourage were visiting Trenton, New Jersey's Luis Munoz School as part of a day of campaigning. A prearranged photo opportunity called for Quayle to conduct a spelling bee. Quayle's chief-of-staff Bill Kristol asked, "Has anyone checked the cards?" and was assured that they'd been looked over (Quayle 331). Quayle explains the rest of the story:

We got to the point where it was twelve-year-old William Figueroa's turn to go to the board and spell whatever was on the next card, which was the word *potato* – except that the card, prepared by the school, read *potatoe*, with an *e*. I can't remember if the spelling struck me as odd or not, but William spelled it correctly on the blackboard – no *e*. I noticed the discrepancy, showed the card to the other adults with me, and as the nodded in agreement, I gently said something about how he was close but had left a little something off. So William, against his better judgment and trying to be polite, added an *e*. The little audience in front applauded him, and that was it (Quayle 331-332).

Of course, it was mildly embarrassing that the vice president hadn't recognized that the word was misspelled, but when the media ran with the story it became yet another indictment of Quayle as an airhead. That Quayle had failed to catch that there was an extra vowel on a word not only blotted out innumerable issues of actual substance, but 13 years later, it seems to be the first thing most people mention when Quayle's name is brought up.

Naturally, incidents of this sort did nothing to help Quayle debunk his image as a simpleton. The perception of Quayle's intelligence had sunk so low that he was even blamed for a gaffe that never took place! In the alleged gaffe, Quayle said that all his travels in Latin America made him wish he'd better studied the Latin language. The story had its roots in a simple Quayle joke, told, of all people, by Claudine Schneider, a Republican congresswoman (Quayle 131). "Of course I never did say that," explains Quayle. "But in political terms, maybe even historical ones, it almost doesn't matter whether I did or not" (Quayle 131).

The "Latin America gaffe" seems to represent a complete departure of reason. It's difficult to accept that anyone – regardless of how they felt about his politics or qualifications – could have believed Quayle was that ignorant. In Standing Firm, Quayle says that various unidentified news outlets reported it as fact. For any stations or papers that did so, such an irresponsible report is a disgraceful sign of poor judgment.

Reflecting on the coverage he endured from a press corps that seemingly enjoyed nothing more than embarrassing him and highlighting his every mistake, in Standing Firm, Quayle makes an interesting point comparing his margin for error compared to that of his successor. "When Al Gore made a reference to the leopard changing his stripes instead of his spots, misstated the name of President James Knox Polk, and botched our nation's motto (e pluribus unum)[,] people took it for what it was: a natural mistake. If I'd done it, there would have been a week of Quayle jokes on the late night shows and three dozen editorial cartoons set inside zoos" (Quayle 49). This is a funny observation, but what's even funnier is that while Quayle may have been speaking rhetorically, he's probably in a literal sense correct.

## Looking Ahead

Though Quayle continued to offer memorable gaffes from time to time – and of course this is easy to do when the media is eager to help – he had apparently more or less handled the job proficiently. As the fourth year of his term began, the task for Quayle would be to help Bush get reelected and secure four more years to repair his own gravitas.

In a hypothetical second term for George H.W. Bush, the administration would, in terms of the vice presidency, presumably have followed a similar pattern as the Reagan administration. If so, as heir apparent, Quayle would have taken on increasing responsibilities and, more importantly, had the increased visibility he so desperately needed.

In late 1991 and 1992, there were actually some signs that Quayle had begun to dig himself out of the public relations hole into which he'd sunk four years earlier. As summer wore into fall, more and more articles, in publications ranging from the conservative National Review to the liberal Economist, at least subtly acknowledged that Quayle was no clown. Predictably, his biggest gains in popularity were with conservatives. As put simply in the headline of a U.S. News in World Report story by Michael Barone and David Gergen, "Conservatives to Bush: More Quayle!"

In August 1991, Quayle led a trade delegation on a four-country tour of Latin America. David Rockefeller, former head of Chase Manhattan and a moderate Republican was among the delegates. Pleasantly surprised that Quayle wasn't the boob he'd heard about, Rockefeller sung his praises: "I've found Quayle's statements throughout to be knowledgeable, friendly, and appropriate . . . If anyone had come on this trip without knowing his past image, you would think the United States could not be better represented" (Woodward and Broder 205).

One "insider" explained his feelings on Quayle this way:

I think [Quayle's] smarter and probably more qualified than some people who have been president of the United States in our 200 years . . .

It's tough to make the argument that he is absolutely the smartest and most qualified guy, but at the same time, this airhead stuff is really unfair. He's somewhere in between . . . and he's a hell of a lot closer to the top than he is to the bottom (Woodward and Broder 181).

Though endorsements such as this could certainly have been stronger, they represented undeniable progress from where Quayle had been after the 1988 campaign. But that improvement aside, for Quayle to put himself in position to win the Republican nomination in 1996, a second term as vice president would have been indispensable.

Leading up to the 1992 Republican National Convention, Quayle was aware of just how daunting it would be to complete the salvation of his image. "You're going to see a new Dan Quayle," he told CNN's Bernard Shaw. "I had a bad campaign in 1988 personally and I am not going to repeat the same mistakes. I'm going to rely on my own political instincts. They got me where I am. I am a determined individual" (Dionne).

But for all his determination, Quayle seemed either unwilling or unable to address his relatively poor skills as a formal public speaker. According to Woodward and Broder:

. . . three years after he failed to make the transition from the ad-lib style he had always used for his Indiana campaigns for the House and the Senate to the scripted speeches the Bush campaign insisted he deliver in 1988, Quayle is no closer to solving the public speaking problem. In the six months that [The Washington Post] traveled with him, his speeches repeatedly were marred by inappropriate emphasis on unimportant phrases, by curious inflections and stumbles. He often looks and sounds as though he is reading the text for the first time. Marilyn Quayle, in an interview, pronounced judgment: "He can't read a speech" (Woodward and Broder 200).

"That is something I'm going to have to deal with at some time," Quayle admitted in 1992. "I have not dealt with it significantly" (Woodward and Broder 200). Presumably this was among the endeavors Quayle planned on pursuing in a second term that was never to be.

## **Chapter Four: To Phoenix from the Ashes**

### **Transition**

*As we'll discuss below, Quayle's one campaign for President was unsuccessful.*

*Interestingly, the man whose political strength ultimately convinced Quayle to end his run bares some striking similarities to the former vice president.*

*Like Quayle, President George W. Bush champions the importance of faith and "family values." Also, both men are typically described as friendly and affable. Perhaps most notably, Bush's reputation for verbal gaffes is even stronger than Quayle's. But, as Phil Bremen explains, there's a very important difference in how this shortcoming is spun with Bush:*

*To be an effective leader, a politician must be an able communicator. Like Quayle, George W. Bush has made frequent verbal missteps. But President Bush has parlayed his linguistic blunders into an advantage, at least among his supporters. He has presented himself as a plain-spoken "regular guy." His mispronunciations and mangled grammar have led his constituents to embrace him as one of their own. Quayle was less successful in pulling this off. He seemed, in all respects, a lightweight (Bremen).*

*Some clear similarities also exist between Quayle and former President Ronald Reagan. Again, personal "likeability" is a trait associated with both. Reagan and Quayle also both hailed from the upper Midwest, and enjoyed particularly strong support among the most conservative elements of the Republican Party. However, if a propensity to misspeak was Quayle's clearest tie with George W. Bush, a certain aloofness (or at least perception thereof) would be the closest with Reagan. For example, while in office, unless they had specifically prepared, neither man would likely be able to discuss the details of a trading treaty with Guatemala, nor presumably, would either think such minutiae was particularly important for him to know offhand.*



*At a social occasion after Quayle had left office, Steve Bell told him that he reminded him of Reagan in some ways. It had been meant as a compliment, though Bell had the impression that it wasn't taken well and that Quayle may have mistook the statement as a reference to this "aloof" reputation.*

*It would seem what separated Quayle from these two-term presidents was an ability to turn weaknesses into strengths, or failing that, to quash and minimize negative publicity. Certainly as governors, both George W. Bush and Reagan had more occasions to employ, and thus hone, such skills than Quayle had as a congressman and Vice President.*

### *A First Time for Everything*

At the outset of 1992, few would have believed that President Bush (still wildly popular in the wake of the Persian Gulf War) would be defeated. But as the year dragged on, the recession then in force weighed more and more heavily on voters' minds. To make matters worse, the coordination of the reelection campaign was poor. Columnists Michael Novak and Rowland Evans called it "the worst conceived incumbent presidential campaign in memory" (Quayle 344). Quayle expanded on the campaign's problems in Standing Firm:

The betting was that the President, if he were to preserve any chance of reelection, needed what the Wall Street Journal called a 'knockout' at his own convention. So off the party went to Houston, trying to steal the Democrats' playbook. Which is just what we did – except the edition we got hold of was the one from 1984 . . . (Quayle 346)

Quayle awoke on November 3, 1992 having never lost an election. By the morning of the fourth, this streak was over. Bill Clinton's charm and seemingly unconditional charisma was too much for Bush and Quayle to overcome (and though the race wasn't between Clinton and Quayle, Clinton's knack for finding the right words at the right time and delivering them smoothly, seemed the antithesis to Quayle's error prone speaking). On January 20, 1993, four

years to the day after Quayle had come into office, Al Gore became the 45<sup>th</sup> Vice President of the United States.

### *A Return to the Top?*

After the election, Republicans immediately began speculating about potential Republican nominees in 1996. Quayle had been planning a 1996 run for four years, but now the prospects of such a campaign were drastically damaged. Rather than taking the baton from George H.W. Bush as Bush had from Ronald Reagan, Quayle would have to beat out primary opponents; again, Bob Dole and Jack Kemp seemed the most likely Quayle rivals.

But as Terry Neal and Ceci Connolly explained in the Washington Post, a 1996 run wasn't in the cards for Quayle: "In early 1995, after treatment for blood clots and assessing his fund-raising prospects, Quayle announced he would not seek the presidency in 1996. The Indiana native then moved to Phoenix to run a political action committee, Campaign America, which raised \$6 million in the last election cycle, according to aides" (Neal and Connolly). Senator Bob Dole eventually won the nomination and subsequently selected Jack Kemp as his running mate, though the duo would ultimately fall to Clinton and Gore.

On April 14, 2000, Quayle announced he would run for the White House. In some ways, his chances appeared better than they would have been in 1996. After eight years of an often-turbulent administration, much of the public seemed ready for change. In addition, instead of facing popular incumbent President Bill Clinton, in 2000 the Republican nominee could expect to face the same competent but lackluster Al Gore whom, according to most, Quayle had bested in the 1992 Vice Presidential debate (Goldman and Mathews).

To lay out an agenda for what he'd like to accomplish if elected, in 1999 Quayle authored Worth Fighting For. Unfortunately for Quayle, his 2000 candidacy didn't get off the ground. After a disappointing 8<sup>th</sup> place finish in the Iowa Caucus, Quayle concentrated solely

on New Hampshire (Quayle on the Trail). Though Quayle's campaigning eventually moved him from single digit polling numbers into second place, it was becoming clear that then Texas Governor George W. Bush would be almost impossible to beat. In his withdrawal announcement, Quayle explained his predicament:

The front-runner apparently will have up to \$100 million to spend in the Republican primary . . . If I would win the New Hampshire primary, which I think I had a reasonable chance of doing, looking at the amount of money that I would have to raise and the calendar of [18 primaries in 30 days], it became a very difficult proposition... There's a time to stay and there's a time to fold. There is a time to know when to leave the stage (Quayle Bows Out).

In 2004, George W. Bush ran as an incumbent and faced no significant primary challengers. Vice President Dick Cheney has declared he won't run in 2008, and while Senator John McCain of Arizona currently seems to be the most frequently discussed potential Republican candidate for that year, at this point the nomination is essentially up for grabs. If Quayle does make another run in 2008, he will be 61, and as in 2000 the biggest task will be overcoming the image problems with began seemingly the moment George H.W. Bush announced him as his running mate 20 years before.

### *Citizen Quayle*

Outside of politics, all appearances suggest the former Vice President is doing well. Worth Fighting For was the third book of Quayle's published since he left office, joining his 1994 memoir Standing Firm and 1996's The American Family, a book about family values.

After a two year teaching stint at a graduate business school, Thunderbird, the American Graduate School of International Management, Quayle has been primarily occupied with business pursuits (Dan Quayle). He is president of Quayle and Associates and serves on a number of company boards, including the companies IAP, K-2 and Aozora Bank in Tokyo (Dan Quayle). Perhaps most notably, he's the Chairman of Cerberus Global Investments,

LLC, a private investment fund with over 14 billion dollars under its management (Dan Quayle).

## **Conclusion**

*"The last thing I want to do is duck responsibility for the mistakes, small and large, that I've made over the years: I gave the media plenty of ammunition during the campaign and later. But there was an obsession with my small verbal blunders that went beyond the bounds of fairness"- Dan Quayle (Standing Firm 50).*

*I think it's true that journalists often are guilty of piling on, but my sense is that Quayle brought it on himself. – Former NBC News correspondent and Indianapolis television news anchor Phil Bremen (Bremen).*

As a student in Ball State University's Telecommunications Department, I humbly believe that the journalistic training I've received is among the best possible. I've also benefited from thought provoking history professors and appreciate that the retelling of history is often tainted by any biases of the historian. As such, I've tried very hard to be fair in my examination of this topic. In this paper, I hope that I have shed light on both the media's and Vice President Dan Quayle's perspectives regarding his coverage.

So what caused the negative stigma to form around Quayle, a man that even critics must agree caught an inordinate amount of flak? Both he and the national media clearly bare some responsibility. Quayle's contribution was to emerge on the public stage under unimaginable scrutiny without having adequate preparation. This isn't wholly his fault, as some aspects of such readiness would come only with time and experience.

But in the days following his announcement in August 1988, Quayle exacerbated his perception problems with a series of poorly considered responses during prime time interviews. Throughout the campaign, and then through his term as vice president, Quayle was guilty of enough verbal blunders to sustain his image as an unintelligent son of privilege who had reached success only through good fortune. As for Quayle's hope of resurrecting his image in office, the "sidekick" factor of the vice presidency rendered impossible the attainment of the massive amount of positive press necessary to overcome first impressions.

The other side of the coin is a striking and undeniable unfairness on the part of the media. After 1988, not only were Quayle's words and deeds frequently dismissed *ad hominem*, but he himself was often portrayed in an unfair quasi-prosecutorial way, e.g., Witcover's gaffe patrol.

Of course, entertainers like Johnny Carson and David Letterman (Ball State, '69) also had a hand in crafting Quayle's negative image, but any attempt to blame their like would be misguided. Journalists are meant to be bound by an unshakable commitment to the truth, but satirists are no more journalists than Michael Moore is a historian. Satire is simply a fact of public life – and in fact serves a healthy purpose in a pluralistic, democratic society – but its practitioners aren't bound by the same obligations to truth and fairness as journalists (who, even in the role of columnist, have a responsibility to represent facts accurately). When journalists stoop to lampooning, they betray both their principles and their audience

To blame Quayle's struggles entirely on the media would be unjust. There can be little doubt that what happened to Quayle would not have happened to more polished communicators such as Presidents Ronald Reagan or Bill Clinton had they been in the same circumstances. In Phil Bremen's words, "Neither [Quayle's] voice nor his bearing conveyed the seasoning normally thought to be necessary for holding high office. He seemed to be *playing* grown-up rather than projecting real gravitas – and his performance often looked strained and uncertain" (Bremen).

Clearly, Vice President Dan Quayle had a hand in the creation of the caricature that plagued him, yet to whatever degree he brought his negative image on himself, the inescapable conclusion is that a bandwagon mentality took hold over a significant portion of the national media and ultimately made Quayle the victim of a runaway train of gross journalistic irresponsibility.

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